THE Elders, Miniſters and Meſſengers, OF THE SEVERAL BAPTIST CHURCHES, MEETING AT

Falmouth,	*Bampton,*	*Chard,*	*Frome,*
Chacewater,	*Preſcott,*	*Yeovil,*	*Sarum,*
Plymouth,	*Loughwood,*	*Broadmead &*	*Wotton,*
Kingſbridge,	*Upottery,*	*Pithay,*	*Horſly,*
Cullumpton,	*Wellington,*	Briſtol.	*Cheltenham &*
Tiverton,	*Bridgewater,*	*Paulton,*	*Exon.*

Having received Letters alſo, from

Lyme,	*Trowbridge,*	*Melkſham,*	*Sodbury*
Stokegomer,	*Bratton,*	*Grittleton,*	and
Bicknell,	*Horſington,*	*Calne,*	*Croſcomb;*
Bradford,	*Crockerton,*		

Being met in aſſociation in the city of Exon, the ſecond and third days of June, 1779. To the ſeveral churches they repreſent, ſend chriſtian ſalutation.

DEARLY BELOVED IN THE LORD,

IT is with pleaſure and gratitude we can inform you that we have been brought in ſafety under the wing of divine Providence to the place appointed to hold our annual aſſembly, that we have had a pleaſant and we hope profitable interview with each other, the letters from the ſeveral churches have been read over with care, their reſpective contents attended to, and the caſes of the ſeveral churches ſpread before God with fervency and gratitude on the one hand, and humiliation on the other.

You will naturally expect to hear from us as uſual upon theſe occaſions; and we cannot but think ourſelves peculiarly happy to be able upon this occaſion to congratulate you on the paſſing of the late bill in parliament in favor of Proteſtant Diſſenters, by which our religious liberties are extended and confirmed, and we are enabled as freely to ſpeak, as you are to hear. An event

this,

this, in the courſe of divine Providence, which calls for our moſt grateful acknowledgements, and which we hope will be improved in a ſuitable manner.—But our principal buſineſs with you is as Chriſtians, and as ſuch therefore we ſhall now in the fear of God addreſs you. And this we ſhall do particularly with reſpect to your ſpiritual privileges.

Your privileges as real Chriſtians are great indeed. As ſuch you are the objects of the divine love, and this love is the fountain and ſpring of all the bleſſings you have in hand or hope. This love was free, nothing in you could move him to it, he ſtood in no need of you to ſerve him or to praiſe him, his love took its riſe from himſelf. This love is ſpecial and peculiar, it is conſtant and abiding, the ſame yeſterday to day and for ever. Surely the conſideration of this love, muſt lead you to wonder, gratitude, and thankfulneſs, to think of him that has thus loved you, to praiſe him, to love him, to obey him, to abhor ſin, to love holineſs, and to purſue the glory of God as the great end of all you have and are. Without being thus impreſſed and influenced to conſider yourſelves as the objects of divine love, will only ſerve to amuſe and deceive, you will live without God, die without hope, and periſh for ever.

As real Chriſtians you have been redeemed by the blood, the precious blood of Chriſt, as a Lamb without blemiſh and without ſpot. 1. *Pet.* 1. 19. Yea Chriſt hath redeemed you from the curſe of the law, having been made a curſe for you. *Gal.* 3. 13. Yea he hath redeemed you to God by his blood. *Rev.* 5. 9. You are by him redeemed from a vain converſation, from all iniquity, from the guilt, the dominion, the defilement, the love, and the practice of ſin; remember this redemption was free and voluntary on the part of him that died for you, that it is perfect and eternal, *Heb.* 10. 14. *Heb.* 9. 12. You muſt from hence ſee, and may you for ever feel thoſe ſtrong obligations which this privilege lays you under, to love, praiſe, and glorify your Redeemer. The apoſtle repreſents it as laying Chriſtians under an everlaſting obligation to this duty, 1. *Cor.* 6. 20. For ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body. and in your ſpirit, which are God's; thus the apoſtle judged. 2. *Cor.* 4. 14. that he died for all, that they that live ſhould not henceforth live unto themſelves, but unto him that died for them

As real Chriſtians you have been called by the grace of God, permit us to ſur you up to look to the rock whence you were hewed, and the hole of the pit whence ye were digged, *Iſaiah* 51. 1. Ye were alienated from the life of God, *Eph.* 4. 18. dead in treſpaſſes and ſins, *Eph.* 2. 1. having no hope and without God in the world—But he who commanded the light to ſhine out of darkneſs, hath ſhined into your hearts, 2. *Cor.* 4. 6. he hath

quickened

quickened you, hath made you willing in the day of his power, *Pſal.* 110. he hath ſent forth the ſpirit of his ſon into your hearts, &c. *Gal.* 4. 6. and the ſpirit beareth witneſs that you are the children of God; from all which you muſt ſee and feel the reaſonableneſs and force of that apoſtolick exhortation, walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called; remember it is an holy calling, be ye therefore holy in all manner of converſation and godlineſs, *Eph.* 4. 1. he to whom you are indebted for this calling is infinitely pure and holy, and he requires you to be ſo. It is an high calling, therefore let it be your ambition to live high, ſcorn every thing mean and baſe, you muſt bluſh to be ſeen in the filthy rags of your former ſtate, or to be making proviſion for the fleſh to fulfill the luſts thereof, as was the caſe with you, before God brought you into his marvellous light; you will be concerned to have the world under your feet, and Chriſt near your hearts, you muſt be living upon hidden manna for your conſtant diet, you will let others know that God has furniſhed a table for you in the wilderneſs, and you will tell what great things he hath done for you. Your calling is heavenly, therefore let your converſation be in heaven, let it be your conſtant care to carry on a correſpondence with heaven; be waiting for returns from thence. lay up for yourſelves treaſure there, where neither moth nor ruſt doth corrupt, nor thieves can break through and ſteal; be daily trimming your lamps, in expectation of your being called away to your eternal home. Your calling remember is an immutable calling. You need not. you ought not to tremble at the ſhaking of a leaf, nor droop and hang your heads becauſe changes are taking place in this world, the foundation of God ſtandeth ſure (though the foundations of ſtates and empires may ſhake to their center) having this ſeal, the Lord knoweth them that are his, and let every one that nameth the name of Chriſt depart from iniquity. You are Chriſtians, and if ſo, then you are the adopted children of God, by this act of his ſovereign and diſtinguiſhing grace you have been received into the number, and have a right to all the privileges of the ſons of God; this glorious ſtate you muſt be ſenſible includes in it many great and precious bleſſings, ſuch as the ſpirit of adoption, *Rom.* 8. 14. but ye have received the ſpirit of adoption whereby we cry Abba, Father: becauſe ye are ſons, God hath ſent forth the ſpirit of his ſon into your hearts, crying Abba Father. He ſtands eternally engaged to be, and to act towards you as a Father, he will provide for you, protect you, uphold you, inſtruct and teach you, give you ſtrength for all you are called to do or ſuffer, you are freed from the curſe due to ſin, and the dominion of it, you are heirs of God, *Rom.* 8. 17. and if heirs all things are yours, the whole creation will be made to ſerve you, angels appointed to guard you while here, and when

you

you die they ſhall be your convoy to your Father's houſe, wicked men and devils ſhall not be able to harm you, every thing ſhall work together for your good, and all the glories of the eternal kingdom are reſerved for you.—Need we to ſay honor your Father, acknowledge and make known his dignity and glory, obey him, imitate him, ſubmit to all his corrections, with patience and humility depend upon him, and refer all your concerns to him, let it be your moſt ſteady concern to abound in filial affections, love him, delight in him, be careful not to offend him, pray to him, and wait for him.

Shall we go on to remind you that as real Chriſtians you are juſtified from all things, *Acts*, 13. 39. all that believe are juſtified from all things, being juſtified by faith, you have peace with God, *Rom.* 5. 1. Your ſins are all forgiven, you are accepted as righteous in the ſight of God, in the name and for the ſake of Jeſus Chriſt, you are in a ſtate of peace and friendſhip with God, and you ſhall never come into condemnation, *Jn.* 5. 24. *Rom.* 8. 1. Glorious privilege indeed! Has the God of all grace cancelled your obligation to puniſhment, has he freely forgiven you all your tranſgreſſions, has he at any time given you a comfortable ſenſe of this, by ſaying with perſonal application, (when you have been crying and trembling, as ſelf condemned ſinner at his feet) I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy tranſgreſſions, and as a cloud thy ſins, *Iſa.* 44. 22. and I will remember thine iniquity no more? What were your thoughts at that time, what was you ready to ſay, and do? Let it be your concern to ſhew the ſame diſpoſition and conduct through the whole of your pilgrimage. Was you not melted into a thankful ſenſe of his forgiving love, was you not humbled to the duſt under a ſenſe of your guilt and impurity, was you not with Mary, *Luke*, 7. 37. ready to waſh the feet of Chriſt with your tears, and to wipe them with the hairs of your head; had you then an enemy that you could not forgive? They that are under the influence and efficacy of the ſpirit of grace, while they look on him that bled for their ſins, they will mourn bitterly as for their firſt born; thus it muſt have been with you as real Chriſtians, your ſouls have ſaid, Lord what wilt thou have me to do. I will follow thee whitherſoever thou goeſt; as you have therefore received Chriſt Jeſus the Lord, ſo walk ye in him, *Col.* 2. 6.

Remember alſo that another privilege which belongs to you as real Chriſtians, and upon which we beg leave to addreſs you is, You are the happy ſubjects of a progreſſive work of ſanctification, which ſhall be carried on to the day of perfection; this was the deſign of God when he ſet his love upon you, the end Jeſus had in view when he gave himſelf for you, for this you were adopted into the family of God and renewed in the ſpirit of your minds:

with

with a view to this important end, you will therefore be found in the uſe of every mean which God has appointed, you will be conſtant and fervent in the duty of ſecret and ſocial prayer, you will read hear and meditate upon the word of God, you will carefully fill up your ſtations in and relation to the church; the fellowſhip and communion of ſaints will be dear to you, and this communion of ſaints is to be exerciſed in private converſe, and in the public aſſembly, in mutual prayer, mutual admonition, inſtruction, and conſolation. And as ſaints remember you are bound to leave the fellowſhip of the world, and not to conform to it. Thus you will ſeek after holineſs for yourſelves, and endeavour to promote it in others; this is the way to go on to perfection, it leads on to that purity which ſhall ere long be perfected, it now differs only in the degree and manner of it, from the holineſs of heaven; real holineſs is glory begun, and you have every encouragement to follow after it, becauſe you may be confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jeſus Chriſt, *Phil.* 1ſt. 6. to whom we recommend you as to one who is able to keep you from falling, and preſent you before the preſence of his glory with exceeding joy.

Signed at the requeſt, and on the behalf of the aſſembly, by the Moderator, June 3, 1779.

BENJAMIN FRANCIS.

BREVIATES.

BREVIATES.

WEDNESDAY afternoon precisely at three o'clock, the Association was opened in prayer by our Brother *Bicheno*, the preliminaries were then read, our Brother *B. Francis* chosen Moderator, the letters from the churches read in order, their contents minuted, our Brother *Tommas* desired to draw up the General Letter, and at six o'clock the meeting was closed in prayer by our Brother *H. Philips*.

AT SEVEN o'clock met again, when Brother *Tommas*, preached from *Matt.* 16. 18. *And the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.*

THURSDAY morning precisely at six met for prayer, when five of our Brethren engaged in this exercise, after which the General Letter was read, approved, and signed, and this meeting closed by our Brother *Stradling*.

AT TEN began the more public service by singing as usual, after which our Brother *Kingdon* engaged in prayer, our Brother *B. Francis* preached from *John* 3. 36. *He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life*—and, after singing again, our Brother *Day* concluded the service in prayer.

AT THREE in the afternoon the service was renewed, when our Brother *Wilkins* prayed, our Brother *C. Evans* preached from *Rom.* 3. 31. *We establish the law*—and the meeting was closed in prayer, having sung at the usual intervals, by our Brother *Tommas*.

The more immediate business of the Association was then attended to. The several collections this year for the Association Fund, it appeared, amounted to 27l. 11s. 3d. And all year 31. 1 6s. 6d. was expended for the several purposes agreed to at our last meeting. Such as towards the repairs of five different places of worship, distributing books, and village preaching. Voted several sums for the like purposes this year. This little fund appears to have been exceedingly useful in its present infant state, and is capable of great improvement if duly encouraged.

Agreed, to advise the Church at *Falmouth*, in case they meet with any fresh difficulty about burying the dead, to apply to the Secretary of this Association, who will take proper measures to obtain due relief.

Agreed,

Agreed, to tranſmit, by our Secretary, the moſt ſincere and hearty thanks of this Aſſociation. to the Reverend Gentlemen of the Committee, in London, for their zeal and activity in ſuperintending and promoting the late bill in favor of Proteſtant Diſſenting Miniſters and Schoolmaſters; and eſpecially for their attempts to procure the paſſing of the ſaid bill without any religious teſt before the Magiſtrate: at the ſame time that we thankfully accept it with the preſent teſt, it being a divine in oppoſition to all human teſts, and our ſubmiſſion to the claim of the Magiſtrate in this caſe no more implying, in our opinion, an acknowledgement of his RIGHT to impoſe any religious teſt whatever, than our ſubmiſſion to his power in the caſe of marriage according to the rites of the eſtabliſhed church, or in the caſe of an oath, upon our faith in the New Teſtament: and we do therefore jointly and unanimouſly unite in requeſting the Committee not only to accept our hearty thanks themſelves, but alſo to preſent them, as they may have opportunity, to thoſe of the Nobility, Biſhops, and Commoners, who have been the liberal and candid ſupporters of the bill referred to.

Agreed, that before any ſcheme of village preaching be encouraged by this Aſſociation, it ſhall be laid before the Aſſociation and approved of by it.

Agreed, earneſtly to recommend days of humiliation and prayer on account of the preſent unhappy ſtate of public affairs, as well as on account of the low ſtate of religion in general, and of many of the aſſociated Churches in particular: as alſo of thankſgiving, to acknowledge the kind hand of divine providence in the late extenſion and confirmation of our religious liberties.

Agreed, to admit the Church at Bridgewater into this Aſſociation.

Agreed, to hold the next Aſſociation at *Frome*, to begin Wedneſday afternoon in the Whitſun week, at three o'clock preciſely. Our Brethren *Evans*, Sen. and *Tommas* to preach the ſermons.—The Aſſociation was cloſed in prayer by the Moderator.

In the aſſociated Churches this year there were

Baptized - -	85	Dead - -	59
Received by letter	5	Diſmiſſed to other Churches	6
Reſtored - -	2	Excluded - -	7
	92		72

Increaſe 20.

The

The State of the ſeveral Aſſociations laſt year was as follows.

Increaſe in the Weſtern, which met at Horſly.	60
Ditto in the Midland, which met at Warwick.	27
Northern Aſſociation, at Leiceſter.	23
Welſh Aſſociation, at Caerleon,	51
	161

The other Aſſociations make no mention of their increaſe or decreaſe.

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